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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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Dedication Acknowledgement

This paper is dedicated to my parents, Barbara Shoemake and Jamal Abdullah-Johnson, for their persistent belief in my abilities. To Mrs. Sebrina Tate for encouraging me to pursue my childhood dream of earning a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. To Dr. Tamara Thomas-Smith for helping me secure the invaluable student data used in this project. To Ms. Kimberly Michelle Williams for providing me with unlimited support throughout this program. To Dr. Leophus Shakespeare King, my friend and mentor of twenty years, who passed shortly after my oral defense, whose unwavering support pushed me past the finish line; I could not have done it without you. May Supreme Consciousness and our Ancestors keep you in safe custody; I will miss you dearly. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Robert DiTomasso, committee chair, and Dr. Susan Panichelli Mindel, committee member, for helping me complete this dissertation and finish my program. I owe much gratitude to the both of you.

Abstract

The academic failure of African American children continues to be a critical issue of study within the social science disciplines (Cokley, 2003). African American middle-school students, in grades 5-8, were administered the Harter Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC) (Harter, 1985). The standardized scores gained from this measure were compared with the students' academic performance in school, as measured by report card grades, to determine if a relationship exists between ratings of self-competence and overall academic success in school. A correlational analysis was used to ascertain which aspects of self-competence, as measured by the Harter, were most correlated with academic achievement. Student open-ended responses, from six qualitative questions answered upon completion of the SPPC, were analyzed to determine if they revealed any specific cultural information that could provide additional insight into the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement in middle-school African American children. A discussion of the findings, their relevance for psychologists and educators, and recommendations for future study are provided.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The poor performance of African American middle-school students has been of premium interest to psychologists, educators, and other social scientists for decades. They have been trying to determine why these students begin to do poorly in the middle grades (Cokley, 2003) in an effort to prevent subsequent truancy and dropping-out at the high school level (Kunjufu, 1995). The low rate of achievement among African American middle-school students is considered to be a significant factor related to many of the subsequent challenges these children face in society (Kunjufu, 1995). Perceived causes of these challenges, or problems, fluctuate from genetic deficiencies in intelligence to lack of interest in academic subject matter (Cokley, 2002; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992). The current study examined the relationship between self-competence and academic achievement among African American middle-school children.

Academic failure among African American children has reached epidemic proportions (Cokley, 2002; Kunjufu, 1995; Kunjufu, 1989). With the advent of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and its mandate for high stakes testing, the costs of underachievement and academic failure may be more critical than ever before. Debates and deliberations regarding the cause of this problem have included genetic assumptions (Galton, 1869) as well as subjective assumptions regarding the importance and value that African American children place on receiving a formal education (Cokley, 2002). Hare and Hare (1991) discussed the psychological dropout that often precedes the physical dropout experienced by so many African American children. The issue of psychological dropout, or detachment, may be related to the disidentification theory argued by Cokley

(2002; 2003) and Osborne (1997) and may be a step in the disidentification process that may help explain how children begin to detach their self-esteem from their academic performance. If psychological dropout is the precursor to subsequent physical dropout, then it also needs to be studied as a variable of interest in the overall etiology of African American students' failure in school. As research shows, the academic challenges of African American children are complex and include several factors (Cokley, 2002; Cokley 2003; Osborne, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between academic achievement and self-concept among African American middle-school children. This study also surveyed the qualitative responses of the student participants to determine if possible cultural factors mediated the relationship between the two variables of interest in the current study. Literature in the field of psychology is rich with information on general self-concept. However, there is a gap in the research on the role that cultural factors may play in the self-concept of African American middle-school students during the grades in which these children begin to struggle, and on how these unique cultural factors may shape their self-concept and possibly influence their academic performance in school. There is some consensus among many of the researchers in the area of child self-concept who report that there is some degree of difference that separates the development and functionality of self-concept in African American versus European American children (Cokley, 2002; Cokley 2003; Osborne, 1997).

Research Questions

1) Is there a relationship between subjective ratings of self-concept and academic achievement among African American middle-school children?

2) Are there any cultural factors that may mediate the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement among African American middle-school children?

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Definition, Functionality, and Measurement of Self-Concept

Finn and Rock (1997) identified positive self-regard as a component of academic success for students who are at risk for school failure. Killeen and Forehand (1998) found support for a Transactional Model of Self-Esteem (TMS) in children which demonstrated that the personality and behavioral characteristics of parents and children had reciprocal effects on each another. Maternal behaviors and beliefs toward their children influence self-perceptions and ultimately the self-esteem of their children; however, consistent with the theory of TMS, the development of self-esteem is somewhat complex, consisting of numerous bidirectional processes that influence the development of self-esteem in children as it relates to the parent-child relationship (Killeen & Forehand, 1998). In addition to the influence that parental factors have upon the development of self-concept in children, Bornholt (2005) found that 5- through 12-year-old children integrate aspects of self-knowledge regarding their skills and knowledge of the particular activity in question into the development of their self-concept. Still further, Crocker and Wolfe (2001) found that self-esteem is at least partly based upon the contingencies that individuals consider valuable and important. Life activities (i.e., athletics, academics, financial success) that are not considered important to one's sense of self are not likely to impact self-esteem as much as behaviors that are central to one's identity (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

Lau, Yeung, Jin, and Low (1999) found that academic self-concept is multi-faceted, with students having skill-specific self-concepts, but also that each of the skill-specific self-concepts is multidimensional. Investigating the multidimensionality of an

English self-concept, Lau et al. (1999) found that subcomponents (listening, speaking, reading, writing) for an English self-concept existed simultaneously, with each having its own self-concept level (Lau et al., 1999). Emotional and academic factors also have been found to influence the development of self-concept; Ralph and Mineka (1998) found that a relationship exists between student self-esteem and depressive symptoms following academic examinations, with students with high self-esteem having fewer depressive symptoms and students with low self-esteem having more depressive symptoms; they also found that the anxiety in students with low self-esteem increased even after they were presented with tasks that normally lead to a high probability of success. They concluded that children with low self-esteem routinely look for data to confirm their low self-beliefs, and the inconsistent feedback caused by academic success leads to increases in anxiety, even when these children are successful (Ralph and Mineka, 1998).

Bracken and Lamprecht (2003) argued that research in the area of self-concept has not been particularly successful in defining the construct. Many of the existing references do not include a solid theoretical framework for their development, which has left the construct itself as somewhat ambiguous over the years. Generalizations appear to be frequent when self-concept is studied, and the selection of instruments for study do not always appear to have been based upon solid research and development (Marsh & Yeung, 1997a).

Bracken & Lamprecht (2003) held that the original approach to self-concept conceptualization did not allow for the potential impact of environmental variables upon self-concept development. They argued that whether one believes self-concept to be an internally constructed element or merely a descriptor given to a particular set of

behaviors, its importance lies in the fact that professional psychology still must study how it is acquired. Bracken and Lamprecht postulated that although there is debate regarding whether or not differences exist among the similar constructs of self-concept, self-esteem, and self-image, the constructs appear so similar that the terms can be used interchangeably. They also criticized early self-concept instrument developers as focusing upon the unitary dimension of self-concept while pulling together various items from different potential subdomains of the construct with no theoretical basis. These authors stated that self-concept is currently considered a multidimensional construct with several subdomains that may not yield the same levels of functioning across fields (Bracken & Lamprecht, 2003).

Byrne (1996) also found self-concept to be a multifaceted construct but noted that the different subdomains of the construct were less distinguishable in the primary grades, and less distinguishable by primary-school children themselves. Byrne also suggested that although younger children may begin to develop the capacity for understanding the various subcomponents of self-concept, differences remain between the manner in which younger versus older children may compare themselves to their peers. Whereas younger children may look at more concrete traits, such as size and number of friends, older children may look at personality features and school performance (Byrne, 1996). Bracken and Lamprecht (2003) found that regardless of theoretical orientation, the subdomains that were found to exist were similar across studies to include the social, affective, physical, academic, and familial self-concepts. In the primary grades, self-concept also was found to be hierarchically structured, with global self-concept being at the top, and the other subdomains following (Bracken & Lamprecht, 2003).

One explanation of the way self-concept is acquired comes from Bracken (1992), who used social learning theory to advance the position that self-concept is derived as children interact with their environment and are punished and rewarded in various contexts in which they function. Bracken expounded upon the way in which people interact with their environment and form judgments of themselves through the four evaluation standards, including the absolute, comparative, ipsative, and ideal. The absolute standard includes judgments based upon failure or success on certain tasks; the comparative standard relates to when a child compares himself or herself to other children performing the same tasks; the ipsative standard relates to self-comparisons a child makes among differing levels of skills in various self-concept areas and allows for compensation for a lack of skill in one area with success in another, which maintains the stability of the self-concept; and the ideal standard relates to the simple accomplishment of preplanned goals and objectives that one has set for himself or herself (Bracken, 1992).

Lightsey, Burke, Ervin, Henderson and Yee (2006) found that a difference exists between generalized self-efficacy (GSE) and self-esteem, with the latter being a more general estimation of one's overall self-worth and GSE helping to foster or hinder levels of self-esteem. Bracken and Lamprecht (2003) reached the conclusion that self-concept remains a poorly understood concept. Marsh and Yeung (1997b) also concluded that the construct of self-concept needs to be improved and that it cannot effectively be differentiated from the related, but different, construct of self-attribution.

The field of self-concept study has led to the development of multiple assessments for this construct, with some controversy regarding its definition, as well as interscale validity of the different instruments that have been used (Strong and Feder, 1961). Marsh,

Craven, and Debus (1991) found that the multidimensional aspects of self-concept for children can be measured as early as kindergarten. Children in the primary grades were able to distinguish between different aspects of self-concept which become increasingly more discreet over time (Marsh, Craven and Debus, 1991). Tafarodi and Ho (2006) reviewed the current state of study on self-concept and suggested that there is still considerable room for debate regarding improvements in construct definition and measurement of self-concept. Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen (2002) found that there was high convergent validity and low discriminant validity among measures of self-esteem, neuroticism, and locus of control. They concluded that these constructs may point towards a higher order construct, not yet known, of which these three traits may function merely as subcomponents. They suggested the possibility that a more generalized form of neuroticism may be related to this higher order construct (Judge et al., 2002).

Self-Concept as Predictor of Academic Success

Guay, Marsh, and Boivin (2003) found that self-concept ratings, of elementary school children, grew more stable over time and were more closely related to academic performance with age. They also found evidence of reciprocal influence between self-concept and academic achievement. Marsh and Yeung (1997a) also found evidence for the reciprocal influence of self-concept and academic achievement, particularly among high-school students. Marsh (1990a), in one of the few longitudinal studies conducted in this area, also found that eleventh- and twelfth-grade achievement scores for high-school students were significantly affected by prior self-concept scores. Chambres and Martinot (1999) investigated the development of academic self-belief as it relates to students' need

for academic self-enhancement and academic self-knowledge. They found that students' academic self-beliefs were influenced by their social standing and were more likely to be accurate when the students had a long history of unsatisfactory performance or when specific academic contexts were assessed (Chambres & Martinot, 1999). Chapman, Tunmer, and Prochnow (2000) found that a significant relationship exists between reading self-concept and reading performance in early learners; their research demonstrates that skill specific academic self-concept begins to develop and affect subsequent learning much earlier than previously thought. This finding was supported by Harter (1982; 1985) during development of the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC) and Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC) scales.

This finding also supports previous findings by Wattenberg and Clifford (1964) who concluded that self-concept scores taken during kindergarten remain relatively stable across the early years. Marsh (1990b) found that math and English self-concepts were negatively correlated, with higher scores in one area being related to lower scores in the other. Marsh recommended that specific math and reading self-concept measures be used instead of a general academic self-concept measure (Marsh, 1990b). This finding was in support of previous research that also found that a separate verbal and nonverbal measure of self-concept may address academic self-concept more effectively in school-aged children (Marsh, Byrne and Shavelson, 1988). In a study of middle-school Latino and European American students, Bouchey and Harter (2005) found that adult perceptions of ability influenced student academic self-perception and subsequent performance. Pajares and Miller (1994) found that the math self-efficacy beliefs of undergraduate college students influenced their subsequent performance moreso than did math self-concept and

previous experience. Marsh (1986) found a relationship between academic self-concept and self-attributions of success or failure, with students having positive self-concepts and strong academic achievement being more likely, than students with negative self-concepts and weak academic achievement, to attribute success to internal causes. Helmke and van Aken (1995) found that math self-concept in second- through fourth-grade German students did not have a significant effect on subsequent achievement during elementary school. Pietsch, Walker and Chapman (2003) found that math self-efficacy beliefs were more predictive of subsequent performance than was math self-concept among high-school students.

Dickhauser and Reinhard (2006) found that young-adult students determine whether or not they can meet academic task demands based upon the cognitive difficulty of the assignment. If the cognitive difficulty appears manageable, domain-specific self-concept is used; however, general self-concept is used if the cognitive difficulty is assessed to be high (Dickhauser & Reinhard, 2006). Pierson and Connell (1992) found that the level of effort and cognitive self-beliefs of retained third- through sixth-grade students were poorer than those of their peers; however, these students did not differ significantly from their peers in domains of social skills and global self-worth. Findings such as these illustrate the hypothesis of this study: the self-perceptions of children have a clear and measurable relationship to their subsequent performance in school. Wattenberg and Clifford (1964) found that self-concepts in children begin to develop much earlier than previously thought and continue to shape children's views of their ability as they proceed through school. Marsh (1992) also found that a relationship exists between academic self-concept and subsequent achievement scores but recommended more

research be done to determine the content specificity of self-concept most related to subsequent achievement. Marsh and Yeung (1997) found that prior academic self-concept was statistically significant in the areas of mathematics, science and English. However, they also found that academic achievement was predictive of later academic self-concept.

The two constructs of academic self-concept and academic achievement were found to be mutually influential (Marsh & Yeung, 1997b). Marsh (1990a) also found that academic self-concept influenced subsequent academic performance, but academic performance did not have a subsequent effect on academic self-concept. Marsh and Parker (1984) found that socioeconomic status (SES) may mitigate the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement, with students from higher SES levels having academic achievement levels more commensurate with their academic self-concept levels. Awad (2007) found that academic self-concept, in a sample of African American college students, was predictive of subsequent grade point average (GPA), but global self-concept (GSC) was not. Lent, Brown and Gore (1997) found that academic self-concept was predictive of subsequent performance, but the concept was not interchangeable with the construct of self-efficacy, which is more concerned with one's beliefs regarding completion of specifically defined tasks. Pietsch, Walker, and Chapman (2000) found that self-efficacy beliefs as well as mathematics self-concept were predictive of subsequent math performance, but self-efficacy scores were a stronger determinant of performance than were general math self-concept scores. Despite a few studies that reject this conclusion, the majority of the research clearly suggests that academic self-concept and academic performance have reciprocal effects. However, the

exact causal mechanisms and pathways for the reciprocal determinism may require more investigation.

Effects of Setting on Self-Concept

Bouchey and Harter (2005) found not only that academic self-perceptions affected subsequent academic achievement but also that students' perceptions of what their peers, teachers and parents think of them are predictive of their academic self-perceptions. Cole (1991) found that peer and teacher evaluations of fourth-grade-student academic competence were predictive of changes in student academic self-concept over the course of the school year, but only peer evaluation of social competence was predictive of subsequent change in that area. Marsh and Parker (1984) found that student academic self-concept was positively correlated with family SES, but high SES schools tended to be related negatively to the academic self-concepts of their students. Trautwein, Ludtke, Koller and Baumert (2006) found that academic self-concept is influenced by the educational setting where learning takes place. Supportively using the meritocracy principle, which assumes a child's self-evaluation of achievement will have a significant effect upon their general self-concept, these researchers claim to have substantiated the underlying hypothesis of the meritocracy principle. The significant contribution of their research is in demonstrating that the learning environment can be a significant moderator in the development of self-concept by either strengthening or destabilizing it.

Trautwein et al. (2006) found that overall general self-concept was not a strong predictor of academic achievement, except when domain-specific academic self-concept was analyzed. These finding are significant in two major ways. First, if the learning environment can impact the development of self-concept, then the role of school culture,

as well as of pre-academic developmental experiences is important. Gest, Domitrovich, and Welsh (2005) found that academic reputation among peers was predictive of changes in childrens' academic self-concepts, further underscoring the role of setting on a child's self-beliefs. Guay, Boivin, and Hodges (1999) found that poor peer relations in school were related to subsequent lowered academic self-concept in elementary-school children. This finding underscores the role of school adjustment in the fostering of academic self-competence and subsequent achievement. Altermatt, Pomerantz, Ruble, Frey, Greulich (2002) found that peer evaluative discourse influenced the academic self-perceptions of children in the primary grades. Hoge, Smit, and Hanson (1990) found that school experiences have a significant, yet inconsistent, effect on global and academic self-esteem, particularly in the areas of school climate and feedback from teachers.

Trautwein, Ludtke, Marsh and Nagy (2009) found that students incorporate information regarding the perceived success of their school and/or class into their own academic self-concept formations and that low achieving students could be affected negatively by placement in a high achieving class, while high-achieving students were not as affected when placed into challenging courses. Marsh (1984) found that fifth graders, across cultures, who attribute their academic success to their own abilities and efforts had more positive academic self-concepts, while those who attributed their poor performance to a lack of ability and effort had poorer academic self-concepts. Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi (1992) found, in a study conducted with undergraduate students, found perceived risk of receiving negative feedback regarding unsuccessful attempts influenced decision making in students with low self-esteem, but not in students with high self-esteem. However, when risk of receiving negative feedback was eliminated

altogether, students with low self-esteem were equally likely as students with high self-esteem to attempt high-risk activities (Josephs et al., 1992). Ackerman, Brown, and Izard (2004) found that family income, and the instability it often creates in low-income households, was related to school adjustment and academic self-competence in elementary-school children.

Effects of Race and Culture on Self-Concept

Osborne (1997) found that African American boys have a unique relationship with and tendency towards academic disidentification that is not seen to the same extent in girls of the same race or in children of other races. He found that unlike African American girls, Hispanic boys and girls, and European American boys and girls, African American boys continued to disidentify self-esteem from academics throughout high school, where the strength of this negative relationship continued to increase until the conclusion of their senior year of high school (Osborne, 1997). Osborne's finding supports the work of Cokley (2002; 2003), as he has found that a negative correlation does exist between academic achievement and self-concept among African American children, and most significantly in African American boys (Osborne, 1997). Osborne (1997) analyzed some of the data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), initiated in 1988, to assess for disidentification among 1,062 African American boys; 1,070 African American girls; 632 Hispanic boys; 694 Hispanic girls; 5,868 European American boys; and 5,711 European American girls. He found that the relationships between academic achievement and self-concept operate in a uniquely different way among African American children as compared to Hispanic and European

American children, with a consistent and increasingly negative relationship between self-concept and academic achievement that only strengthens over time among the former.

Cokley (2002) investigated the cultural hypothesis underpinning academic failure among African American children. The cultural explanation of failure suggests that African American children do not value education and are able to detach their self-esteem from the academic setting. According to Cokley's findings (2002; 2003), the longer African American boys are in school, the less relevant academic performance becomes as a factor influencing their academic and general self-concepts. Cokley (2002) found that only among African American boys was there a decrease in the relationship between GPA and academic self-concept. For all European American students and African American girls, the relationship between GPA and academic self-concept remained steady or increased. Cokley's findings, based upon research with 358 African American students and 229 European American students, demonstrated that the academic disidentification seen among African American boys is unique and unprecedented. According to Cokley's (2002) research, the isolated role that education has on the self-concepts of African American boys can be a result of influences that come from any of the subsystems that comprise a child's cultural experience. Osborne (1997) also found a significant decrease in the relationship between achievement and self-esteem scores for African American boys in high school; for no other group were the changes as significant. Osborne (1997) concluded that African American boys are particularly vulnerable to disidentification.

Smith, Levine, Smith, Dumas and Prinz (2009) found that a significant relationship exists between racial-ethnic identity and scholastic competence in African

American children. In this study of third-grade African American children, a significant relationship was found also between racial-ethnic identity and social acceptance, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct. The most significant relationship in this study was found between racial-ethnic identity and reading/listening comprehension scores (Smith et al., 2009), suggesting that the racial identity of African American children may influence their academic self-concepts. Oyserman, Gant, and Ager (1995) found evidence that African American children develop identity schemas that are evident early in their school careers. These schemas influence all aspects of their behavior and play at least a marginal role in their academic self-competence. They argued that racial identity, and the manner in which it is developed, may play an influential role in scholastic success for African American children (Oyserman et al., 1995). They found that African American and Latino students experience their greatest rise in collective group esteem during the middle-school years, as opposed to European American students, whose group esteem remains rather high and stable across time (French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006). Mandara and Murray (2000) found that the self-esteem of African American boys was affected by parental marital status, family functioning and income, whereas for African American girls, of these three factors, only family functioning was important.

Halle, Costes and Mahoney (1997) found that low-income African American parents' beliefs about their childrens' abilities were more predictive of achievement outcomes 9 months later than were their childrens' own self-beliefs. These parental beliefs in their childrens' abilities were more significant in determining achievement than were parental achievement-related behaviors. Hay, Ashman, van Kraayenoord, and Stewart (1999) found that children strive to maintain and verify their self-concept, even

when it is negative. They also found that low self-concept in one academic area can lead to low self-concept in another area (Hay et al., 1999). Arbona and Power (2003) found that parental attachment with their adolescents, regardless of race, influenced self-esteem and the development of subsequent behavioral challenges. Di Paula and Campbell (2002) found that individuals with high self-esteem were more likely to persist actively in their efforts after failure and to consider alternatives, when available, than were persons with low self-esteem, who may continue to perform but in a more detached manner. Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, and West-Bey (2009) found that for both European American and African American early adolescents, attending an integrated school and receiving cultural socialization from their parents were associated with better academic and behavioral outcomes. However, when children's parents prepared their children to receive bias from others, this warning was associated with a negative effect on children's self-esteem (Hughes et al., 2009). Turner, Beidel, Hughes and Turner (1993) found that test anxiety, in third- through sixth grade African American children, was related to lower academic self-concept and academic achievement.

Gender and Academic Self-Concept

Bracken and Lamprecht (2003) reported that the literature in the field of self-concept, relative to gender of children, is somewhat conflicting, with studies showing no effect from gender to studies showing a significant effect. Cokley (2002) found that a significant relationship between academic self-concept and GPA remained consistent for European American boys and African American girls. However, over time, there was an inverse relationship between the two constructs for African American boys and a significant increase for European American girls. Cokley studied academic

disidentification among 588 college students; his results support the position that a gender difference does exist in relation to academic disidentification for both African American and European American students, with the most significant difference being between African American young men and female young women.

Marsh, Smith, and Barnes (1985) found that the academic self-concept of female and male differed despite their achievement levels. Girls reported lower math self-concepts even when their math achievement levels were higher than those of boys (Marsh et al., 1985). Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi (1992) found that women and men may derive their self-esteem from different sources. Womens' self-esteem appears related to their ability to secure dependent and trusting relationships with significant others, while the self-esteem of men may derive from their ability to establish their individuality and self-reliance (Josephs et al., 1992). These findings were supported by those of Cross and Madson (1997), who found at least two types of self-construals that guide the manner in which men and women develop self-esteem: an interdependent construal, which focuses upon building and maintaining nurturing relationships, and an independent construal, which focuses upon building one's independent life and working individually towards success (Cross & Madson, 1997).

This literature review makes clear that much of the research in the field of self-concept and African American children suggests that there is, in fact, a relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. However, the extent of this relationship, as well as the diversity of impact that self-concept has upon the different academic-skill domains, is inconclusive. The current study investigated the extent of this relationship and hopefully provides more data and clarity as to the differing degrees of

impact that self-concept has on the various academic-skill areas. Still further, the relationship that general self-concept and academic self-concept have with academic achievement has been clarified. In short, the current study has replicated some previous findings but also has found others, along with some culturally relevant factors, not extensively discussed in previous literature that may mediate this relationship.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The sample of this archival study was comprised of 101 student participants. The sample included 53 female participants (52.5%) and 46 male participants (45.5%). The overwhelming majority of students identified their racial heritage as Black, followed by African American. However, all participants would be correctly identified as African American. The grade levels of the participants were from fifth through eighth grade, with the frequencies being fairly evenly distributed as follows: fifth grade (27.7%), sixth grade (18.8%), seventh grade (26.7%) and eighth grade (26.7%). Slightly more than 40% of the children identified as Christians, with just as many identifying as having no religion.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

As archival data were used, there were no exclusion criteria for the study. The only non-participant students were those not present on the day that the Harter Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC) was administered.

Design

Archival data collected from a low-income, predominant African American public school in the northeastern section of the United States were used for the purposes of this study. Archival data were obtained during the 2007-2008 academic school year and included (a) report card grades, (b) Harter SPPC inventories, (c) demographic questionnaires for each child, (d) responses to six open-ended questions answered after completing the Harter SPPC, and (e) Hope and Culture scales, which were created to gain possible information with regard to cultural factors that may mitigate the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement in this population. Male and female,

special-education and regular education, fifth- through eighth-grade students at one public middle-school successfully completed the Harter SPPC questionnaires, the demographic questionnaires, and the concluding open-ended questions.

A correlational analysis was conducted to determine if a relationship existed between self-concept, as measured by archived scores on the Harter SPPC and academic achievement, as measured by archived school report-card grades. A factor analysis was conducted later to determine if the Hope and Culture scale items could be classified further into homogenous subgroups that measure similar constructs. Subsequently, a qualitative analysis of the six open-ended responses, offered by the children after completion of the Harter SPPC profiles, was undertaken. As this correlational study used archival data, subjects' identities were kept confidential, and a control group was not used.

Measures

The five measures used for this study included (a) SPPC, (b) student achievement report card grades, (c) six open-ended qualitative questions completed by the students, (d) a demographic questionnaire, and (e) additional Hope and Culture scales, consisting of seven items each, which were included at the end of the Harter SPPC inventory. Achievement scores were computed on a 4.0 scale (A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, F = 0.0) using final-marking-period grades for the 2007-2008 school year. Letter report-card achievement grades were converted into a numerical scale for Harter SPSS purposes as follows: A = 95%, B = 85%, C = 75%, D = 65% and F = 55%.

1) *Harter SPPC (1985)* - Self-concept scores were derived using standard scoring procedures as delineated in the *Manual for the Self-Perception Profile for Children*

(SPPC). Harter (1982) constructed the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC) to address the fact that self-competence is a multifaceted construct, even among young children. The PCSC included four scales: Cognitive, Social, Physical and General Self-Worth; Harter (1982) wanted to account for the possibility that children may have differing levels of competence in various areas. Harter (1982; 1985) also developed the general self-worth scale to be independent of the competence components, as opposed to being derived from them, to underscore her findings that general self-worth may operate differently across children and ages, as well as the fact that children may incorporate particular aspects of their lives and abilities into their self-worth that are not accounted for by the subscales of the PCSC. Unique to the conceptualization and development of the PCSC is the multiresponse format developed by Harter (1982; 1985), which seeks to minimize attempts by children to respond to traditional two-choice answer formats with socially desirable responses.

The Harter PCSC employs a four-response dual-answer format for each question, requiring children to decide first on a general response followed by a more specific qualitative response for their initial response (Harter, 1982; 1985). Harter criticized the "either-or" format of most self-concept scales that assumed children felt either one way or the other about themselves and that they all shared the same level of intensity for that particular response (Harter, 1982). The PCSC items were arranged on the self-report protocol to prevent consecutive items from the same scale from being answered consecutively (Harter, 1982). High-competence and low-competence items for each scale were distributed equally to ensure a balanced, nonleading assessment. The PCSC factors and subscales are reliable for third- through ninth-grade students; however,

because of the increasing specificity of responses among older children, additional scales may need to be developed to reflect that specificity and discriminatory validity among older children (Harter, 1982). Harter (1985) revised the PCSC and renamed it the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC). The name revision was made partly to specify that some scales within the revised measure more specifically addressed thoughts about the self, rather than competence in a particular set of skills (Harter, 1985).

Harter (1985) included two additional scales, Physical Appearance and Behavioral Conduct, in the revision to address the rising concerns with school-based behavior and the important influence that physical appearance has upon General Self-Worth. Similar to the original PCSC scale, the six questions for each of these subscales are worded so that three questions reflect high competence on that particular scale and the remaining three reflect low competence in that area. The items are arranged interchangeably, with children answering questions from the various scales in seemingly random order. A set of standard instructions are read to the children, who are then administered the Harter SPPC individually or in a group format; the Harter SPPC recommended that the questionnaire be read to third- and fourth-grade students to ensure readability and comprehension of text. Harter reported that Harter SPPC scores become more highly correlated as the children decrease in age. In addition, certain scales were found to be related during subsequent analyses, including Scholastic Competence and Behavioral Conduct. In addition, a triad relationship was discovered among the scales that measure athletic, physical and social adequacy. Among the scales, Physical Appearance was found to be the most consistently correlated with General Self-Worth;

while the scales measuring academic and social adequacy increased in correlation as the age of the children increased (Harter, 1985).

As with other measures of self-concept, the Harter SPPC is not without its limitations, which include the findings that perceived competence in the various areas may be measuring different subcategories related to the age of the children and that older children may interpret questions differently from younger children, thus possibly undermining validity (Harter, 1985). The academic skill level and mental status of respondents are also issues, as reading and comprehension skills can support or undermine a child's ability to answer questions as intended by the developer (Harter, 1985). The multistep and multiresponse nature of the Harter SPPC may improve validity but also may add a component of confusion on the part of child respondents that may further undermine validity and compromise reliability. Admittedly, the Harter SPPC does not assess children's perceptions of nonschool domains or competencies that may be important to children in the larger world in which they live (Harter, 1985).

2) Student Achievement Report-Card Grades - Achievement scores were computed on a 4.0 scale (A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, F = 0.0) using final marking period grades for the 2007-2008 school year. Grades for each subject in the areas of math, reading, science, social studies and writing were used for the purposes of this study. For SPSS entry, each grade score was given an equivalent value as follows: A = 95%, B = 85%, C = 75%, D = 65% and F = 55%. As letter grades, rather than numerical grades, were assigned by the children's school, a numerical conversion was necessary.

3) Hope and Culture Scales - In addition to the six Harter scales that were included in the Harter SPPC, two additional scales were created to help capture culturally

relevant features of self-concept that were not assessed directly by the Harter itself. Seven items comprised the Hope scale, and seven items comprised the Culture scale. All 14 items were reverse scored and included with the original Harter SPPC items for inclusion in the SPSS scoring system.. The seven Hope items, included as questions 37 through 43, and the seven Culture items, included as questions 44 through 50, can be viewed in Appendix A as part of the Harter SPPC inventory to which they were attached.

4) Six Open-Ended Qualitative Questions Completed by the Students - In an attempt to capture culturally relevant factors that may go undetected by mere completion of the Harter SPPC, six questions were created for students to answer in written form immediately after completion of the Harter SPPC. These questions were intended to help inform and clarify the responses offered on the Hope and Culture scales. These six questions were (a) How has being Black affected your performance in school? (b) How has being Black affected the way you feel about yourself? (c) What does being Black mean to you? (d) Why do you think school is, or is not, important to you? (e) Why do you think you do well, or do not do so well, in school? (f) Why is graduating from high school important, or not so important, to you?

5) Demographic Questionnaire - Eleven demographic questions were created for students to answer immediately prior to completing the Harter SPPC. These questions were developed to help gain information regarding each child's SES and religious background. As SES and religious factors potentially can be as significant as cultural factors, these questions were key in helping to interpret any culturally relevant features of each child's open-ended responses to the six questions they answered after completing the Harter SPPC. In addition, demographic data were important with reference to the

external validity of this study's findings. The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) included the following items: (a) Gender, (b) Grade, (c) Month & Day of Birth, (d) Race, (e) Age, (f) Religion, (g) Mother's Job, (h) Father's Job, (i) Mom's Highest Level of Education, (j) Dad's Highest Level of Education, and (k) Extracurricular Activities.

Procedure

A sample of 101 fifth- through eighth-grade students at a Philadelphia middle-school completed the Harter SPPC (Harter, 1985) in their regular classrooms. Completion of the Harter SPPC took only one class period. Students were read the directions to the Harter SPPC and were guided through completion of the entire inventory, including the demographic items and open-ended questions, by an examiner whose job was to read each item clearly, along with the possible responses, and periodically to remind students of the directions for completing the inventory. This procedure was done to ensure that students understood the items and took sufficient time to answer each item honestly. This was deemed necessary also because the unique dual-response answering format of the Harter SPPC could cause a degree of confusion on the part of student respondents.

Since special-education students also participated in this study, reading ability could not be ascertained beforehand, thus necessitating an examiner who could read each item to ensure completion even by those with reading difficulties. After students completed the Harter SPPC, school staff attached a copy of the student's report card grades to each completed Harter SPPC. To ensure student confidentiality, both the Harter SPPC and the attached report-card-grade profile were assigned a matching number; no names were used throughout the duration of the study. Data from the Harter SPPC and

report card grade profiles were entered into SPSS format, and a correlation was run on the necessary data.

Chapter 4: Results

Student Academic Performance

In this section, data obtained from the correlation and factor analysis will be reviewed and the results reported for each area in which an analysis was conducted. Math scores were fairly evenly distributed among students, with 18.8% of students earning a grade of "A", 20.8% earning a grade of "B," 28.7% earning a grade of "C," and 26.7% earning a grade of "D." Most student participants earned a grade of either "B" (28.7%) or "C" (28.7%) in reading, while 22.8% of students earned a grade of "A" and 14.9% of students earned a grade of "D." Science grades were fairly representative with 27.7% of students earning a grade of "C," 30.7% earning a grade of "B," and 25.7% earning a grade of "A." However, only 8.9% of students earned a grade of "D." Most student participants earned a grade of "C" (29.7%) in social studies. Other grades for social studies included "A" (28.7%), "B" (24.8%) and "D" (10.9%).

Most students earned a writing grade of "B" (41.6%). Other grades included "A" (5.0%), "C" (26.7%) and "D" (5.9%). The participants ranged in age from 10 years old to 16 years old. The distribution of age is as follows: 10 years (5.0%), 11 years (20.8%), 12 years (21.8%), 13 years (26.7%), 14 years (20.8%), 15 years (4.0%) and 16 years (1.0%). Many children reported that their mothers had completed high school (35.6%), with nearly that number indicating they were unsure of their mother's highest completed level of education (25.7%). Many children also reported that their fathers had completed high school (29.7%), with more reporting that they were unsure of their father's highest level of academic attainment (38.6%). Reported occupations for mothers and fathers were very diverse and ranged from blue-collar trade jobs to professional careers.

The first research question asked if there is a significant relationship between ratings of self-concept and academic achievement among African American middle-school children. Results indicated that significant correlations were observed between Scholastic Competence and all academic areas. As shown in Table 1, these correlations ranged from a low of .219 to a high of .482 in Science and Reading, respectively. For each of these correlations, a coefficient of determination was calculated as reported in Table 1. These findings reveal that for each academic area, the proportion of differences in academic performance attributable to or accounted for by differences in Scholastic Competence were as follows: Math (12.88%), Reading (23.23%), Science (15.44%), and Writing (12.81%). In the core skills areas of Reading, Writing, and Math, Scholastic Competence accounted for the highest amount of variance in performance relative to Science, in which Scholastic Competence accounted for a very small proportion of variance.

Intercorrelations of Grade Scores and Harter Scores

A significant correlation was not found between any of the five core academic areas (Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Writing) and Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence and Physical Appearance. However, significant correlations were observed between Behavioral Conduct and all academic areas. Also as show on Table 1, these correlations ranged from a low of .275 to a high of .419 in Science and Writing, respectively. For each of these correlations, a coefficient of determination was calculated. These findings reveal that for each academic area, the proportion of differences in academic performance attributable to or accounted for by differences in Behavioral Conduct were as follows: Math (13.46%), Reading (8.64%), Science (7.56%), Social

Studies (13.18%) and Writing (17.56%). In the core skill areas of Writing, Math, and Social Studies, Behavioral Conduct accounted for the greatest proportion of variance. Significant correlations were found also among the three skill areas of Reading, Social Studies and Writing, which were found to correlate significantly with Global Self-Worth. The highest correlation was found between Global Self-Worth and Writing (.311), with the lowest correlation being found between Global Self-Worth and Reading (.216). However, the proportion of variance that can be attributed to Global Self-Worth is rather small, with only 4.67%, 6.25% and 9.67% for Reading, Social Studies, and Writing, respectively. No significant correlation was found between Global Self-Worth and Math or Science.

Table 1

Intercorrelations and Coefficient of Determination for Grade Scores and Harter SPPC Scores

Measure	Scholastic Competence		Social Acceptance		Athletic Competence		Physical Appearance		Behavioral Conduct		Global Self-Worth	
	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2
Math	.359*	.12	.033	.00	-.066	.00	-.053	.00	.367*	.13	.098	.00
Reading	.482*	.23	-.042	.00	.010	.00	-095	.00	.294*	.08	.216*	.04
Science	.219*	.04	.026	.00	-.025	.00	-.145	.02	.275*	.07	.179	.03
Socstud	.393*	.15	.043	.00	.040	.00	.016	. 00	.363*	.13	.250*	.06
Writing	.358*	.12	.046	.00	-.016	.00	-.101	.01	.419*	.17	.311*	.09

* = $p < .05$

Intercorrelations of Harter Scores

An analysis of the intercorrelations among the Harter SPPC scales (see Table 2) revealed that Physical Appearance was significantly correlated with Social Acceptance, Scholastic Competence, and Athletic Competence. Global Self-Worth was significantly

correlated with Scholastic Competence, Athletic Competence, and Behavioral Conduct. Behavioral Conduct was significantly correlated with Athletic Competence.

Table 2

Intercorrelations and Coefficient of Determination for Harter SPPC Scores

Measure	Scholastic Competence		Social Acceptance		Athletic Competence		Physical Appearance		Behavioral Conduct		Global Self-Worth	
	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2	r	r^2
SC			.029	.000	.188	.0353	.257	.0660	.145	.0210	.338	.1142
SA	.029	.008			.176	.030	.374	.1398	.073	.0053	.194	.0376
AC	.188	.0353	.176	.0309			.214	.0457	.352	.1239	.391	.1528
PA	.257*	.0660	.374**	.1398	.214*	.0457			.161	.0259	.080	.0064
BC	.145	.0210	.073	.0053	.352**	.1239	.161	.0259			.258	.0665
GSW	.338**	.1142	.194	.0376	.391**	.1528	.080	.0064	.258*	.0665		

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Intercorrelations of Grade Scores with Hope and Culture Scales

The second research question asked whether cultural factors may impact the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement in African American middle-school children. Significant correlations were found between the core skill areas of Math, Reading, and Writing and the Hope scale created by the researcher for the purposes of this study. Hope accounted for the largest proportion of variance for Reading outcomes and the lowest variance for Math. These findings reveal that for each of these three areas, the proportion of differences in academic performance attributable to or accounted for by differences in Hope were as follows: Math (6.96%), Reading (9.42%), and Social Studies (9.30%). Hope was not found to be correlated with Science or Writing outcomes. In addition, the Culture scale items, created for the purposes of this study, were not found to be correlated with any of the core academic skill areas. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3

Intercorrelations and Coefficients of Determination for Grades, Hope, and Culture

Measure	Hope		Culture	
	r	r^2	r	r^2
Math	.264*	.0696	.157	.0246
Reading	.307*	.0942	.150	.0225
Science	.125	.0156	.057	.0032
Socstud	.305*	.0930	.132	.0174
Writing	.223	.0497	.083	.0068

* = p< .05

Culture Scale Factor Analysis

A principal components factor analysis using vaimax rotation and Kaiser's criterion to extract factors was conducted for the seven Culture Scale items, and revealed two factors: Race Pride and Race Identity. The Race Identity Factor described the extent to which students identified with their race of origin, while the Race Pride Factor described the extent to which the students took pride in their racial identity. The Race Pride factor was correlated with overall academic performance ($r = .282, p < .01$). Furthermore, Race Pride was correlated with Math achievement ($r = .187; p < .05$), Social Studies achievement ($r = .288; p < .01$), and Writing achievement ($r = .205; p < .01$). Race Identity was not correlated with academic achievement. A factor analysis was also conducted with the seven Hope items revealing one factor of Hope. Hope was correlated with overall academic achievement ($r = -.262; p < .05$), indicating that increased hope was correlated with higher academic achievement. A significant correlation was found between the Hope Scale and the Harter Scholastic Competence ($r = .460; p < .01$), Behavioral Conduct ($r = .285; p < .01$) and Global Self-Worth ($r = .364; p < .01$) Scales. However, there were no significant correlations between the Hope scale

and the Harter Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence or Physical Appearance scales. The Culture scale was significantly correlated with the Harter's SPPC Scholastic Competence ($r = .234$, $p < .05$) and Behavioral Conduct ($r = .248$; $p < .05$) scales.

However, the Culture scale was not correlated with the Harter SPPC Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, or Global Self-Worth scales. These findings suggest that for each Harter SPPC subscale the proportion of differences attributable to Hope are as follows: Scholastic Competence (21.16%), Behavioral Conduct (8.12%), and Global Self-Worth (13.24%). The proportion of differences on the Harter SPPC subscales attributable to Culture are as follows: Scholastic Competence (5.47%) and Behavioral Conduct (6.15%). See Table 4 for details.

Table 4

Intercorrelations and Coefficients of Determination for Harter SPPC Scores, Hope, and Culture

Measure	Hope		Culture	
	r	r^2	r	r^2
Scholastic Competence	.460*	.2116	.234*	.0547
Social Acceptance	.116	.0134	.120	.0144
Athletic Competence	.069	.0047	.141	.0198
Physical Appearance	.178	.0316	.026	.0006
Behavioral Conduct	.285*	.0812	.248*	.0615
Global Self Worth	.364*	.1324	.120	.0144

Note: * = p< .05

Chapter 5: Discussion

Support for Previous Findings

The primary focus of the current research study was to investigate the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement among African American middle-school students. In support of the conclusions reached by Marsh (1992), the results of the current study show that a relationship does exist between these two constructs. Much of the research shows that there is a predictive relationship, with self-concept scores influencing subsequent performance (Marsh, 1992), or that a reciprocal relationship exists between self-concept and academic achievements (Marsh & Yeung, 1997a). Although previous studies go beyond merely establishing a relationship to implying causality, the current study has confirmed only the presence of a relationship without any proof of the direction of causality. This finding has implications for the education of low-income African American children, as it demonstrates that fostering a healthy self-concept in these children is at least as important as focusing on academic rigor. It also raises the possibility that without due attention to the development of positive self-concepts, global and academic, improvements in achievement levels may be much more difficult to attain.

Scholastic Competence and Academic Performance

In the current study, Scholastic Competence scores were significantly related to performance in all five academic areas (Reading, Social Studies, Writing, Science and Math). However, Global Self-Worth was found to be significantly correlated with only some (Reading, Social Studies and Writing), but not all (Science and Math), academic areas. This finding is consistent with the literature that shows that overall self-concept is not a strong predictor of academic achievement (Trautwein et al., 2006). This important

finding suggests that teachers, parents and educators should be sure to focus upon building skill-specific academic self-concepts, as well as global self-concept, as not all skill areas will be affected directly by increases in global self-esteem alone (Awad, 2007; Trautwein et al., 2006). In addition, there was some evidence for the work of Guay, Marsh and Boivin (2003), which suggests that self-concept becomes increasingly related to academic performance with age, as Global Self-Worth was related to three of five academic areas for these children, and may continue to increase as they move into high school.

Intercorrelations Between Grade Scores and Harter Scores

Support for a relationship between reading self-concept and reading performance (Chapman et al., 2000) was obtained, as Scholastic Competence did relate with reading scores. In addition, of all five academic areas, reading scores had the strongest relationship with Scholastic Competence but the weakest significant relationship with Global Self-Worth. This finding supports prior findings that self-concept is related to math, science and English achievement (Marsh & Yeung, 1997a), as all academic scores correlated with Scholastic Competence. This finding also supports the finding that academic self-concept is related to GPA but is not as related to global self-concept (Awad, 2007). Some evidence for the contingency model of self-esteem (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) also may be present as results show that Math and Science had no relationship with Global Self-Worth, which may suggest that these children may not consider math and science performance as an important component of their self-esteem make-up. This finding, related to the contingency model of self-esteem, suggests that educators and parents need to help children determine the components that should be

important in their lives. If children are selecting the contingencies that they determine impact their self-esteem, the adults in their children's lives need to ensure that they are influencing the selection of those contingencies. Math and Science The absence of a relationship between Math and Science scores and Global Self-Worth may at least partly support the research of Hoge et al. (1990) who found that school experiences have significant, yet inconsistent, effects on global self-concept and academic self-esteem. Findings by Marsh et al. (1998), which suggest that separate verbal and nonverbal self-concept scales need to be developed, are partly supported by the fact that Math and Science scores, in the current study, did not correlate with Global Self-Worth scores as did Reading, Social Studies and Writing scores. This may suggest that math and reading self-concept scores negatively correlate with one another, as found by Marsh (1990).

An interesting observation made of the current findings relates to the construct of academic self-efficacy. Harter (1985) explained that the rationale for changing the name of the instrument from the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC) to the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC) was to specify that children were being asked about their self-perceptions but not necessarily their skill competence in a particular academic domain. This point is being raised to address the possibility that the scores obtained in this study may not necessarily reflect a child's estimation of his or her ability, but of his or her self- perceptions only, which, according to some researchers (Lent et al., 1997) implies that the relationship between academic achievement and Global Self-Worth is not as strong as the relationship one may have obtained had skill-specific academic self-efficacy beliefs been assessed. The current findings do appear to support research that suggests academic self-competence is multifaceted (Lau et al., 1999), as the

proportion of variance in each academic skill area attributable to Scholastic Competence was different in each of the five academic areas, with Reading (23.23%) being the highest and Science (4.79%) being the lowest.

As the archival data in the current study were obtained from students attending a school in a low socioeconomic neighborhood, a relationship between family income and academic self-competence could not be investigated or confirmed, as suggested in previous research (Ackerman et al., 2004). Such a finding would be particularly relevant, as it would highlight socioeconomic circumstances as a factor in student achievement. If socioeconomic factors are related to academic achievement a community approach toward improving student achievement that includes support for their families, as opposed to simply student-based approaches alone. It also would suggest the need for further research toward investigating the particular pathway through which family SES effects subsequent student achievement. Whether the effects are psychological, with parents modeling poor academic behaviors, or economic, with a scarcity of resources impacting the amount of time parents spend discussing the importance of education with their children, would be very important to know. Similarly, as archival data were used, determining if emotional factors or poor peer relations had an impact on self-concept development was not possible , as had been suggested by previous researchers (Guay, et al., 1999; Ralph & Mineka, 1998).

Intercorrelations Behavior Conduct and Academic Performance

A significant relationship was found between Behavioral Conduct and all five academic areas. This finding appears to support the hypothesis that effective self-discipline is necessary for successful performance in any subject area. However, as

causality cannot be implied it may also suggest that improved performance in a particular skill area may lead to increased behavioral focus to ensure continuity of progress. The construct of Hope was found to be correlated with Math, Reading and Social Studies achievement, but not for Science and Writing. One hypothesis for this finding relates to the fact that math and reading skills are essential foundational skills upon which all subsequent academic success rests. As such, a child may be more hopeful towards acquiring these skills because of the impact they may have on subsequent learning. The reverse may also be true, as successful mastery of these skills may lead to improved hope in one's ability to learn and do well in other subject areas. As social studies largely incorporates reading as the medium of instruction and acquisition of knowledge, it can be regarded as a subskill contingent upon reading mastery, which may explain why Social Studies was also found to be significantly correlated with Hope. The implications of this finding relate to the need to ensure that children do well in mastering their reading and math skills, as they may use their success or failure in these two areas, in making a general estimation of their likelihood, and hope, for academic success in the future.

Intercorrelations Between Culture Scale and Academic Performance

The Culture scale was not found to be directly correlated with any of the academic skill areas. However, a factor analysis revealed a Race Pride and Race Identity scale, with the Race Pride scale being correlated with Social Studies, Math, and Writing achievement. This finding is similar to findings reported by Smith et al. (2009), who found that racial-ethnic identity was related to reading and listening comprehension scores in third grade students. It also lends support for findings by French et al. (2006), who reported that a racial identity schema may exist that influences academic self-

concept. The implications of this finding are significant, as they lend support to current arguments being made over the need for an African American studies curriculum in the schools where these children are instructed. It speaks to a need to infuse elements of African American history and culture into the curriculum in order to improve levels of racial pride and possible subsequent performance.

Intercorrelations Among Harter SPPC Scales

Among the Harter SPPC scales, Physical Appearance was found to be significantly related to Scholastic Competence, a finding that was not supported in the literature. However, the literature did reveal that poor peer relations were related to subsequent lowered academic self-concept (Guay et al., 1999). The relationship between peer relations and academic self-concept may help explain this finding, as the current study found that Social Acceptance was significantly related to Physical Appearance, thus suggesting that Physical Appearance is related to Scholastic Competence through the medium of Social Acceptance, which is consistent with findings that revealed that social standing influences academic self-belief (Chambres & Martinot, 1999), which further suggests the possible mitigating role of Physical Appearance in the relationship between Scholastic Competence and Physical Appearance.

The findings that Physical Appearance is related to both Athletic Competence and Social Acceptance are rather obvious, as physical features, as well as athletic potential, play a role in peer group acceptance. The finding that Global Self-Worth was related to Scholastic Competence supports research findings that suggest there is a reciprocal effect between these two factors (Marsh & Yeung, 1997b). The finding that Global Self-Worth was related to Athletic Competence was rather expected, given the importance of athletic

ability in the lives of African American middle-school students. The finding that Global Self-Worth was significantly related to Behavioral Conduct was not directly supported in the literature but may suggest the role of self-discipline towards character building and positive self-regard.

Interestingly, Behavioral Conduct was not significantly correlated with Scholastic Competence, as was expected. This finding suggests that, in this particular population, behavioral conduct may not be a factor necessary for success in school, which may necessitate much discussion. One possible explanation may relate to the ability of poorly behaving children to still pass their classes. Another possible explanation may relate to special-education students, who are graded based on progress towards Individual Education Program (IEP) goals, not grade level achievement standards, thereby reducing the role of behavioral conduct towards their academic success.

The finding that Global Self-Worth was not significantly correlated with Physical Appearance also was unexpected, as physical characteristics are important in the lives of children and the literature found that self-esteem is related to the contingencies that children consider valuable (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Perhaps participants interpreted Physical Appearance as meaning clothing and dress rather than as actual physical characteristics. Given the low income demographic of the sample, an emphasis on dress, which is related to income, may have been diminished in the minds of the participants. The finding that Behavioral Conduct was significantly related to Athletic Competence also was not supported in the literature but may suggest that children understand that failure to perform behaviorally in school can lead to their dismissal from interscholastic athletic competitions. Also, some overlap may exist between the constructs of Behavioral

Conduct and Athletic Competence, both involve physical performance to some degree and both may contribute to a higher order construct that has yet to be identified.

Overall, the findings from the current study generally support the findings of previous research, including (a) Global Self-Worth is related to academic achievement and (b) Scholastic Competence is more closely related to academic achievement than is Global Self-Worth. The current study also found that Race Pride is related to achievement in the areas of math, social studies, and writing. Findings from the current study did not particularly support Racial Identity as being related to academic achievement but did highlight a Race Pride factor, not previously discussed in any of the research reviewed for this particular study.

Qualitative Analysis

All students who completed surveys for the purposes of this study were asked to answer six open-ended questions. The purpose of asking these open-ended questions was to provide some additional subjective information regarding the manner in which culture may mediate the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. The six questions asked included (a) "How has being Black affected your performance in school?" (b) "How has being Black affected the way you feel about yourself?" (c) "What does being Black mean to you?" (d) "Why do you think school is or is not important to you?" (e) "Why do you think you do well or do not do so well in school?" (f) "Why is graduating from high school important or not so important to you?" For the purposes of discussing these six questions, comments will be separated into two groups. The first group, which includes questions a, b and c, focused upon student impressions of what being Black means to them, personally and academically. The second group, questions d,

e and f, focused on the importance of academic success in the lives of these children. Given the similarity of responses among the student respondents, the second group of questions will be discussed first.

Prior to discussing the open-ended responses, one must note that many children chose not to respond, for whatever reason, to several of the questions. Some responses were difficult to read and thus could not be interpreted. Some children provided answers that were not related to the question at all and may have been related to weak sentence comprehension skills or to a desire to complete the survey altogether as quickly as possible. Thus, responses were selected from among the completed surveys that represented as many different views and perspectives on the particular questions being asked. As analysis is qualitative, with the quantitative analysis having already been completed, the content of the responses is more important than the number of children who expressed a particular opinion. In addition, given that many children omitted either certain questions or the entire survey altogether, an analysis of the quantitative data alone ultimately would have been inconclusive.

Importance of Education

Generally, all of the children who did provide responses to the second group of questions felt that school was important. Most felt that school was important for future employment, for college, or for both. Graduating from high school was equally important for the very same reasons. Retrospectively, based upon student responses, these two questions could have been combined. Responsibility for why they did, or did not, do well in school was largely related to personal factors. The responses reflected accountability on behalf of the children for their own shortcomings. Responses for poor

performance included such factors as not studying, not paying attention, being distracted by peers, and not being focused during instructional time. These responses also may reflect the childrens' underlying naivete about the educational process and its effect on learning. Thus, responses that would suggest children struggle as a result of poor instruction, poor resources, or poor parental support may not likely come from middle-school children. Their answers may be related to developmental factors, such as a children's tendencies to see themselves at the center of their world, which reflect a strong internal locus of control. As such, children may reward and blame themselves primarily for their success. Whether or not the same trend holds true for high-school students, who are more mature and thus may have a more balanced view of the reasons for their successes or failures, may be of interest to future researchers.

Personal Responsibility

Self-responsibility was also highlighted among children who stated they performed adequately in school. These responses highlighted good study habits, strong parents, personal investment, and intelligence as the reasons for strong in-school performance. With reference to group 2 responses, none of the children who responded to the items indicated that school was not important or that earning a high-school diploma was inconsequential. Thus, understanding the importance of education does not appear to be a significant factor in academic outcomes. Children may understand the importance of academics and still not put forth the effort to achieve. Likewise, ascertaining the variables, in addition to self-concept, which are responsible for the differences between student groups who value education and do not do well in school, versus those who value education and are successful academically, may provide more clarity. Clearly, this study

has demonstrated that a relationship does exist between self-concept and academic achievement.

Impact of Race on Education

Group 1 responses, those focusing upon the first three open-ended questions centered around the impact of being Black on their life, provided a rather interesting trend. Based upon their open-ended responses, children apparently can be affected by race in school but not out of school, and vice versa. For example, some children responded that being Black affected them in school, positively or negatively, but that it did not affect them out of school. There are certain possible explanations for this trend among this group. For example, the school that these children attend is in a racially dense section of a large city that is predominantly African American with few, if any, members of other racial groups. Thus, the school itself, reflecting the racial demographics of the immediate neighborhood, is almost exclusively African American. Given the fact that these children may not have had many experiences with racial diversity, they may have been insulated against the potential effects that come with negative encounters with racism since most of their peers are Black, and their principal is African American as well. This possibility is embodied in the following response, "Being Black does not affect me because I am in a Black community;" which may also hold true for out-of-school experiences as well.

Impact of Race Pride on Education

The response, "Being Black to me means being brave and strong," suggests that children who provided this response may have benefited from the immense historical information that provides examples of African Americans and their institutions that have

demonstrated success and resiliency despite innumerable odds. Thus, these children may derive a degree of race pride from the knowledge of their cultural history, which serves as a source of motivation and obligation to live up to the examples left by their ancestors. "I don't do well in school because sometimes I don't understand the work," reflects a rather adequate explanation for academic difficulty. Children who provided these types of responses may be symptomatic of the ills in large inner-city, predominantly African American public-school districts.

Impact of Racism on Education

The response, "Being Black has affected my performance in school by people talking about other African Americans, how Black you are, or European American you are," may suggest that many African American children have become self-conscious about their racial identity as a result of peer taunting. "Being Black means a lot to me because of our history and what people did for us," is a response that appears to imply that African Americans are where they are through the assistance of benevolent European Americans. A child giving this type of response may have confidence and race pride by way of knowledge of their ancestral and historical past but also may have a view of European American that is not antagonistic, but rather respectful, by virtue of what they believe others have done to advance the cause of African American freedom and independence. The response, "Being Black has affected how I have been in school because sometimes I feel like I have nobody to care for me at all because I'm Black," implies that children who offered this response have been damaged negatively by rejection they perceive to have experienced in school as a result of possible differential treatment they received because of their racial group membership or skin tone. The

statement, "Being Black has affected the way I feel because I have a strong feeling to pick a fight with some people," implies that the student respondents have been influenced to believe that violence, fighting, and interpersonal conflict are uniquely African American traits.

Impact of Racial Heritage on Education

The comment, "Being Black means my ancestors had a hard life," implies knowledge of one's ancestral past as enslaved Africans but does not necessarily indicate whether one is shameful of that past or proud of the ancestors' continuous striving to obtain freedom. The response, "Being Black to me means that it's fun knowing my ancestors came all this way, " suggests these student respondents may take pride in learning about the struggles their ancestors overcame to obtain freedom. Similarly, the statement "Being Black means a lot to me because being Black and having my ancestors fight for rights is a blessing," is indicative of a child who feels honored and endowed with a strong sense of ancestral obligation towards doing well academically and personally. Another statement, "It has effected the way I feel about my self because I love my culture," implies that some children derive dignity and self-respect from learning about the mores and practices of a particular culture. Such a statement goes beyond the mere implications of deriving self-respect and dignity from knowing about one's past to acknowledging culture as the proactive aspect of the human group experience. A child who takes pride in his or her culture is espousing confidence in the collective beliefs, rituals and accomplishments of a people, not merely in their willingness to resist oppression. "I don't think it matters if you are Black or not," and "Being Black don't really matter to me," are statements that appeared more regularly than most of the

students' other responses and suggest that many of the students have not been exposed to or affected by race thus far in their lives.

The statement, "European American people will pick and tease because we are Black, and try to make you feel bad, " suggests that some children, in fact, may have had negative encounters with European Americans, who may have included their classroom teachers, that have led to them to develop suspicion and possible mistrust of other races. This response clearly differs with previous responses that suggested being Black had not come with any repercussions. Another response, similar to the previous response states, "Being Black has affected me because European American people look at Black people like we are crazy." Again, this reply is suggestive of possible negative interactions with European Americans. However, this position also could come from historical or cultural instruction in which African American children can learn, and quite candidly, from television and history books just how inhumanely their ancestors were treated by European Americans.

Impact of Racial Identity on Education

Another rather interesting response offered to the open-ended questions was, "I am not Black but am still African American." Here is a response that draws a distinction between being Black and being African American. One can only speculate as to why this response may have been reported by a child this age. Had the child been older, or an adult, the conclusion could be drawn that this particular person has reached a certain degree of political and racial maturity in which the mere substitution of an adjective for a noun is no longer acceptable. Historically, African Americans were identified by the color of their skin. When Europeans first entered West Africa, a situation was created

which the lightest people on earth were face-to-face with the darkest people on earth. Thus, the latter group came to be identified by their complexion and nothing more.

One response that clearly articulates one of the major trends observed among the qualitative responses that some children feel that being Black affected them in school but not otherwise, and vice versa is exemplified in the statement, "Being Black has not affected my performance in school. Being Black affected the way I feel about myself. Black is the highest population of killing and hate. Being Black means to me that you have to act a certain way to be Black." This response is loaded with perceptions and suggests that a child can be impacted by his or her racial identity in some settings but not in others and that the child is somewhat able to make that distinction. In addition, this response indicates that some children have been impacted disproportionately by the high rate of circumstantial violence in the African American community and that hearing about and witnessing these events appear to impact a child's racial self-esteem and willingness to identify with his or her own people.

Statements such as, "Being Black makes me doubt myself sometimes," appears to highlight self-doubt and the insecurities that may result from cultural ignorance and growing up in a society that has not fully accepted African American equality. "Being Black has affected my performance because some teachers think I am going to play around since I'm Black. Being Black has not made me feel any different." Another statement, "It has affected me because other people do not like Black people's color," suggests the internalization of negative views that others hold about African Americans and their culture. Another statement offered by one student was, "It don't affect me because I'm not all Black."

Impact of Skin Color on Education

The statement, "Being Black means a lot to me. It means that just because my skin is darker than the European American kids it doesn't mean I can't be as smart as the European American kids," implies that this child may have learned enough about his or her African American culture to have been insulated against the negative effects of racial inferiority that can result from not knowing about one's culture. This child appears to view the races as equal and capable of similar accomplishments with no apparent belief in superiority based on race. However, as was similar among many of the comments made by students in this study, when making mention of race, this student appears to be aware that being Black comes with a negative connotation. In other words, this student is stating that just because my skin is Black implies that Black skin may be a negative trait but it is not sufficient to justify accusations of one's inferiority to a European American student. What is at issue here is whether or not this discomfort results from the internalization of negative stereotypes that produces insecurity when the student is identified or whether the student feels the use of an adjective is insufficient to describe an entire race of people. Again, further research could explore the implications of these statements and determine the life experiences, or thought processes, that lead to these conclusions. Further evidence that children can perceive that race may affect them in the school setting but not outside of school, or vice versa, is exemplified in the statement, "Being Black really didn't matter to me because I'm still passing my classes. Being Black has made me seem like I hate myself." This statement implies that the child does not feel that his or her color or culture has affected his or her performance in school but that Blackness has led to feelings of self-hatred.

Impact of Black Teachers on Education

Still another student stated that "Being Black has not affected me in any way, but teachers that are Black teach us better in the classes," which implies no racially charged feelings about oneself but an awareness that African American teachers are more effective when teaching Black students. Whether this child believes that better instruction through an African American teacher is had through the rapport gained by their having similar cultural backgrounds or whether the student feels that African American teachers are more compassionate and concerned about African American students cannot be discerned from this comment. The statement, "Being Black means proving everybody wrong," suggests that this student is aware of the historical obligation that African Americans have had while trying to overcome a society filled with racial bigotry. The response, "Being Black has put a stronger affect on my performance in school because people think us Blacks cannot make it. When I get older I will be one of the African American women to succeed in life. Being Black makes me feel very proud of myself. I feel this way because of some of the history that I know. Being Black has given me even more power, " implies that this child is aware of the negative beliefs others have of African American people, but she is sufficiently motivated to join the struggle to protect the self-respect of her people and prove others incorrect.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

In summary, the present study has replicated previous findings that a relationship exists between self-concept and academic achievement in middle-school students. Unlike the findings in research conducted by Harter (1985), no relationship was found between Scholastic Competence and Behavioral Conduct, which may represent a cultural

difference among African American children. Consistent with previous research, Scholastic Competence was related most significantly to Reading achievement (Harter, 1985). Unlike in previous research findings, Social Acceptance was not related to performance in any of the core academic skill areas. However, Behavioral Conduct was found to correlate significantly with all core academic skill areas. Also, consistent with previous research, Global Self-Worth was found to correlate significantly with Reading, Social Studies and Writing achievement. However, unlike the findings in previous research, the relationship of Global Self-Worth with Reading was the least significant, with Writing being the most significant. Global Self-Worth significantly correlated with Behavioral Conduct but not with Social Acceptance, as previous research indicated. The Hope scale significantly correlated with Math, Reading and Writing performance only, with Math having the weakest correlation.

The Race Pride factor of the Culture scale correlated with overall academic performance but not with any individual academic skill area. The Culture scale also correlated with the Scholastic Competence scale. Similar to Harter's findings (1985), the Physical Appearance scale was significantly correlated with Social Acceptance, Scholastic Competence, and Athletic Competence. However, Harter (1985) did not find Scholastic Competence to be related to Physical Appearance, Social Acceptance, and Athletic Competence. Global Self-Worth was significantly correlated with Scholastic Competence, Athletic Competence, and Behavioral Conduct. Behavioral Conduct was significantly correlated with Athletic Competence.

Summary of Qualitative Responses

Taken together, the qualitative responses offered by the student respondents reflect a diverse array of opinions that cannot be classified easily. Clearly, however, African American middle-school students, even those living in a highly concentrated neighborhood, are extremely aware of the concept of race and the influences, both positive and negative, that it exerts in the day-to-day lives of Black people. Given that respondents ranged in grade and ability level, it would have been interesting to discern whether there were gender or grade differences in the quality of responses. In addition, whether the responses of high-achieving students were qualitatively different from those of low achieving students would have been another relevant finding for this study. The information that could not be ascertained in the present study, but would have been of importance to know, is whether students who claimed that their ancestry was a source of support differed from others in terms of their actual academic achievement. In other words, did children who claimed race pride as a factor in their achievement actually perform better than those who did not? Although many of the respondents clearly saw their culture as a source of strength and motivation, whether or not this perspective effected into their academic performance could not be proved during the present study.

The best conclusion that can be stated regarding the mitigating role that cultural factors may play in the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement among African American middle-school students is that many students believe their racial heritage provides a source of support, while others believe it provides an unnecessary burden. Whether or not cultural knowledge and awareness assume a definitive function within the relationship between self-concept and academic

achievement has not been proved in this study and remains a significant area of inquiry for future research. In support of student beliefs, the quantitative analysis did reveal that a significant relationship between Culture and Scholastic Competence does exist. This finding lends support to student assumptions that cultural factors are, in fact, associated with their subsequent performance in school. In addition, the Race Pride factor within the Culture scale items also was found to significantly correlate with academic performance but not with any academic skill area in particular, which supports student responses by indicating that having pride in one's race is associated with student achievement leading to better overall in-school performance. The direction of this relationship cannot be determined, as it may very well be the case that improved academic performance leads to improved feelings about one's race, but this potential conclusion is not particularly supported by student responses. Student comments clearly suggest that those who considered race as a factor in their education also believed that the cultural factors led to an increase in academic achievement, not the other way around. Nonetheless, future research would need to confirm student assumptions.

The fact that nearly all of the student respondents found school to be important in their life is important given that not all students achieved adequately. Whether or not students felt that cultural factors, rather than school importance, was chiefly responsible for their subsequent academic success, may bring further clarification to this finding. In other words, do children do well in school because they are African American or because school is important? The fact that most of the respondents blamed themselves for their own failures, or successes, was not expected from such young children. The personal responsibility taken by these students was remarkable. Future research on the operation

of academic locus of control among African American children attending a racially homogenous middle-school should be conducted.

Another interesting finding was that children varied on the degree of perceived impact that race had on their lives and on their schooling. The range of responses went from almost no impact to a total impact. The fact that many children reported simultaneously on both the positive and negative influences race had on their lives raises an important question with respect to determining which influence, the positive or negative, is ultimately most responsible for their school performance. Learning the manner in which both positive and negative aspects of race can influence a child is an important area of future research.

Another area of interest relates to the influence of identity as a factor in academic achievement. Student respondents provided varying racial identifiers that went from "Black" to "African American" to "Mixed." Whether or not their specific identity marker interacts with their feelings and beliefs about the role race and culture play within their education could not be determined by the present study but represents a rich area of future research. In addition, many students reported that having a Black teacher leads to better outcomes for them, but whether this perception can be proved quantitatively remains to be seen. Still, there is the issue of skin tone and its role in the academic experiences of light-skinned children as opposed to dark-skinned children. Whether or not children of lighter hue differed markedly from darker skinned children would have been an interesting area of further discussion, had a response difference been detected between the two groups. This question remains an area of future research.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. To begin with, a self-report measure was used as the primary source of information about each child's self-concept. Although self-concept is a difficult construct to measure, particularly if one must rely on alternative sources of information, validity still can be questioned with regard to the possibility that the student participants did not know themselves well enough to report on their self-concepts. In addition, self-report measures are subject to multiple interpretations by different respondents. That is, each child may have interpreted questions in different ways thus leading to differences in answers that were not accounted for in the original standardization sample.

Another important limitation of the study centered on the cultural sensitivity of the Harter SPPC itself. The extent to which African American children were used in the standardization sample is not well described in the publication. The possibility that African American children may interpret certain items differently from other populations is a plausible consideration that may challenge the validity and reliability of the instrument. Still further, regional differences among student respondents are another possible limitation of the study, as Harter's sample participants were taken from California and Colorado. The language used in the Harter SPPC is likely subject to varying regional interpretations.

The Harter SPPC was published in 1985. Although the instrument was revised from its previous model, more than 20 years have passed since its last revision, raising possible questions centered on its continued validity and reliability for childhood populations. The fact that shelved data were used presents a limitation, as the researcher

could not spend time with the children and their families individually to learn more about them and the impact that their family backgrounds and self-beliefs may have had on their academic achievement. Many possible confounding variables that can explain, or contradict, the current set of research findings may be clarified by a more prospective research project. The fact that a correlational study was used limits the ability to draw causal inferences regarding the findings. Although useful information was obtained from the study, the inability to determine the direction of those relationships somewhat limits the usefulness of the findings. Regarding the qualitative study, determining whether students' beliefs and assumptions regarding the impact of race actually could be supported quantitatively, was difficult to ascertain. In addition, the unique role that skin color, teacher effects, and identity played within the varying perceptions students held in regard to the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement would have been interesting to explore but could not be determined from this study. Lastly, the African American student respondents in this study were almost exclusively of low SES. The generalizability of these findings to African American middle-school students from middle and upper SES, may be somewhat limited. Generally, the limitations that are common to most correlational and qualitative research also hold true in the present study.

Implications

The implications of the current research are considerable as they reassert the role that self-concept plays in the academic success of African American children. Educators and psychologists should begin to work together to develop programs that strengthen the self-concept of these children as a factor toward achieving scholastic success. The research also underscores a need to measure self-concept in school-aged children to

determine which students need to be targeted for remediation in that area. Early intervention in the lives of children with poor self-concepts and low levels of self-esteem is crucial toward ensuring their success. The research has demonstrated the bidirectional nature of the relationship between academic success and self-concept, thus necessitating a balanced approach towards academic intervention that focuses on the influence that academic success has upon subsequent self-concept, and vice versa. The need for discussions around the issue of self-concept and the success of African American children is supported by the research and may represent a new direction that should be taken towards reducing low academic achievement levels among African American middle-school students.

Future Research

Future research should focus upon investigating the specific mechanisms and directions of influence that underscore the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. In addition, more research on the relationship between Global Self-Worth and Scholastic Competence needs to be undertaken. More data need to be obtained on the nature of the relationship between Scholastic Competence and each of the core academic skill areas, as the literature suggests that each academic area may have its own self-concept. Although the current study has found that a relationship exists between self-concept and academic achievement, as supported by previous studies, the specific nature of that relationship still has not been investigated fully. More information in this area is needed in order for solid interventions and programming to be undertaken with school-aged African American children from both a preventive and an intervention perspective.

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Appendix A

What I Am Like

SAMPLE SENTENCE

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
	☐	☐	Some kids would rather play outdoors in their spare time . . .	BUT	Other kids would rather watch T.V.		
1.	☐	☐	Some kids feel that they are very good at their school work . . .	BUT	Other kids *worry* about whether they can *do* the school work assigned to them.		
2.			Some kids find it *hard* to make friends . . .	BUT	Other kids find it's pretty *easy* to make friends.		
3.			Some kids do very *well* at all kinds of sports . . .	BUT	Other kids *don't* feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.		
4.			Some kids are *happy* with the way they look . .	BUT	Other kids are *not* happy with the way they look.		
5.			Some kids often do *not* like the way they *behave* . . .	BUT	Other kids usually *like* the way they behave.		
6.			Some kids are often *unhappy* with themselves . . .	BUT	Other kids are pretty *pleased* with themselves.		
7.			Some kids feel like	BUT	Other kids aren't so		

			they are *just* as *smart* as other kids their age . . .		sure and *wonder* if they are as smart.		
8.			Some kids have *a lot* of friends . . .	BUT	Other kids *don't* have very many friends.		
9.			Some kids wish they could be a lot better at sports . . .	BUT	Other kids feel they are good enough at sports.		
10.			Some kids are *happy* with their height and weight . . .	BUT	Other kids wish their height or weight were *different*.		
11.			Some kids usually do the *right* thing . . .	BUT	Other kids often *don't* do the right thing.		
	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
12.			Some kids *don't* like the way they are leading their life . . .	BUT	Other kids *do* like the way they are leading their life.		
13.			Some kids are pretty *slow* in finishing their school work . . .	BUT	Other kids can do their school work *quickly*.		
14.			Some kids would like to have a lot more friends . . .	BUT	Other kids have as many friends as they want.		
15.			Some kids think they could do well at just about any new sports activity they haven't tried before . . .	BUT	Other kids are afraid they might *not* do well at sports they haven't ever tried.		

16.			Some kids wish their body was *different* . . .	BUT	Other kids *like* their body the way it is.		
17.			Some kids usually act the way they know they are *supposed* to . . .	BUT	Other kids often *don't* act the way they are supposed to.		
18.			Some kids are *happy* with themselves as a person . . .	BUT	Other kids are often *not* happy with themselves.		
19.			Some kids often *forget* what they learn . . .	BUT	Other kids can remember things *easily*.		
20.			Some kids are always doing things with *a lot* of kids . . .	BUT	Other kids usually do things *by* themselves.		
21.			Some kids feel that they are *better* than others their age at sports . . .	BUT	Other kids *don't* feel they can play as well.		
22.			Some kids wish their physical appearance (how they look) was *different* . . .	BUT	Other kids *like* their physical appearance the way it is.		
23.			Some kids usually get in *trouble* because of things they do . . .	BUT	Other kids usually *don't* do things that get them in trouble.		
24.			Some kids like the kind of *person* they are . . .	BUT	Other kids often wish they were someone else.		
	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me

25.			Some kids do *very well* at their classwork . . .	BUT	Other kids *don't* do very well at their classwork.		
26.			Some kids wish that more people their age liked them . . .	BUT	Other kids feel that most people their age *do* like them.		
27.			In games and sports some kids usually *watch* instead of play . . .	BUT	Other kids usually *play* rather than just watch.		
28.			Some kids wish something about their face or hair looked *different* . . .	BUT	Other kids *like* their face and hair the way they are.		
29.			Some kids do things they know they *shouldn't* do . . .	BUT	Other kids *hardly ever* do things they know they shouldn't do.		
30.			Some kids are very *happy* being the way they are . . .	BUT	Other kids wish they were *different.*		
31.			Some kids have *trouble* figuring out the answers in school . . .	BUT	Other kids almost *always* can figure out the answer.		
32.			Some kids are *popular* with others their age . . .	BUT	Other kids are *not* very popular.		
33.			Some kids *don't* do well at new outdoor games . . .	BUT	Other kids are *good* at new games right away.		
34.			Some kids think that they are good looking . . .	BUT	Other kids think that they are not very good looking.		
35.			Some kids behave	BUT	Other kids often find		

			themselves very well . . .		it hard to behave themselves.		
36.			Some kids *are not* very happy with the way they do a lot of things . . .	BUT	Other kids think the way they do things is *fine*.		
	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
37.			Some kids really enjoy doing well in school	BUT	Other kids don't really care much about doing well in school		
38.			Some kids think they can greatly improve their grades in school. . . .	BUT	Other kids don't think they can do much to improve their grades in school		
39.			Some kids think they achieve very well in school . . .	BUT	Other kids don't think they do well in school		
40.			Some kids think school success is very important to their parents. . . .	BUT	Other kids don't think school success matters much to their parents		
41.			Some kids think that academic success is very important to their friends . .	BUT	Other kids don't think that academic success is important to their friends		
42.			Some kids really	BUT	Other kids don't		

			want to graduate from high school . .		really care about graduating from high school		
43.			Some kids think they will do very well in college . .	BUT	Other kids don't think they will do very well in college		
44.			Some kids don't think they can do well in school because they are Black . .	BUT	Other kids think they will do well in school because they are Black		
45.			Some Black kids think they could have done better in school had they known more about their Black history and culture . . .	BUT	Other Black kids don't think knowing more about their Black history and culture would have improved their academic performance		
46.			Some kids think being Black makes them inferior to European American students . . .	BUT	Other kids don't think being Black makes them inferior to European American kids		
47.			Some kids think being Black makes them inferior to Asian students . . .	BUT	Other kids don't think being Black makes them inferior to Asian kids		
48.			Some Black kids don't think they are as smart as other children . .	BUT	Other Black kids think they are just as smart as other kids		
49.			Some kids think having a Black teacher would have helped them do better in school . . .	BUT	Other kids don't think having a Black teacher would have mattered much to them in school		
50.			Some Black kids	BUT	Other Black kids		

			think having European American teachers helps them do better in school . . .		don't think having European American teacher has made a difference in their school performance		

Appendix B

SIX OPEN-ENDED QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

1- How has being Black affected your performance in school?

2- How has being Black affected the way you feel about yourself?

3- What does being Black mean to you?

4- Why do you think school is, or is not, important to you?

5- Why do you think you do well, or do not do so well, in school?

6- Why is graduating from high school important, or not so important, to you?

Appendix C

Student Demographic Questionnaire

Gender:

Race:

Age:

Grade:

Month & Day of Birth:

Religion:

Mother's Job:

Father's Job:

Mom's Highest Level of Education:

Dad's Highest Level of Education:

Extracurricular Activities: